

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 044078

EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 5440 ACTION SECSTATE, NICOSIA INFO
AMMAN, ANKARA, ATHENS, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS, JIDDA AND
TEL AVIV FEB 18.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 05440

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS CY EG

SUBJECT: ATTACK BY PALESTINIAN TERRORIST IN NICOSIA

REF: NICOSIA 451

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SADAT AND VP MUBARAK
THIS MORNING, A MESSAGE WAS BROUGHT IN REPORTING TERRORIST
ACT OF TWO PALESTINIANS AT THE AFRO-ASIAN PEOPLES
SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATION (AAPSO) CONFERENCE BEING HELD
AT NICOSIA HILTON HOTEL (REFTEL). ACCORDING TO THE
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PAGE 02 STATE 044078

EGYPTIAN REPORT, WHICH APPARENTLY CAME FROM THE EGYPTIAN
EMBASSY IN NICOSIA, THE EGYPTIAN NATIONAL WHO WAS KILLED
WAS YUSUF SIBAI, CHIEF EDITOR OF AHRAH AND A FORMER
PRESIDENT OF APPSO. THE EGYPTIAN REPORT WENT ON TO SAY
THAT SOME FORTY HOSTAGES WERE BEING HELD, AMONG THEM
FOUR EGYPTIAN NATIONALS. ONE WAS IDENTIFIED AS KAMEL
BAHA AL-DIN A MEMBER OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.

THE TERRORISTS HAD REPORTEDLY DEMANDED THAT ALL THE ARAB AMBASSADORS APPEAR AT THE NICOSIA HILTON WITHIN THE HOUR, FAILING WHICH THEY WOULD BLOW UP THE HOTEL. THERE WAS NO INDICATION AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THE PALESTINIANS.

2. ALTHOUGH SIBAI HAS LONG BEEN A CLOSE ASSOCIATE, THE PRESIDENT TOOK THE NEWS CALMLY. HE GAVE IMMEDIATE INSTRUCTIONS TO VP MUBARAK TO HAVE THE MFA ISSUE A STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE TERRORIST ATTACK. HE ALSO GAVE INSTRUCTIONS THAT THE "KHARTOUM EIGHT", WHO HE EXPLAINED TO ME HAVE FOR PAST SEVERAL MONTHS BEEN ALLOWED TO LIVE WITH THEIR FAMILIES BUT UNDER HOUSE ARREST, BE ROUNDED UP AT ONCE AND JAILED AND THAT WORD BE PASSED TO THE PLO THAT APPROPRIATE ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THEM IF TERRORISTS AT THE NICOSIA HILTON KILL ANYONE ELSE. SADAT TOLD ME THAT THIS LATTER ACTION SHOULD WARN ABU IYAD, WHOM HE SUSPECTS IS BEHIND THE NICOSIA HILTON INCIDENT.

3. I SUBSEQUENTLY CALLED ON ACTING FONMIN BOUTROS GHALI ON OTHER MATTERS. AS I CAME IN HE WAS SPEAKING ON PHONE TO CYPRIOT AMBASSADOR. LATTER HAD APPARENTLY JUST ADVISED HIM OF THE NICOSIA HILTON INCIDENT. ACCORDING TO CYPRIOT INFO, THE TWO PALESTINIANS ARE FROM ERITREA. CYPRIOT MIN INTERIOR SEEKING NEGOTIATE
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PAGE 03 STATE 044078

RELEASE OF HOSTAGES.

4. GHALI CONFIRMED THAT MUBARAK HAD JUST CALLED HIM WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO ISSUE A CONDEMNATORY STATEMENT. ACTING ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE, GHALI HAS DECIDED TO DELAY PENDING FURTHER INFORMATION AS TO WHAT ORGANIZATION THE TWO TERRORISTS REPRESENT. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE PRESIDENCY AND HIS OWN SUBORDINATES WILL REACT IN A MANNER BLAMING ALL PALESTINIANS FOR THIS LATEST TERRORIST ACT. THIS, IN GHALI'S VIEW, SHOULD IF AT ALL POSSIBLE BE AVOIDED. HE AFFIRMED, HOWEVER, THAT AS SOON AS IDENTITY OF THE PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS IS KNOWN, THE MFA WILL ISSUE A CONDEMNATORY STATEMENT. HE ASKED THAT WE KEEP HIM ADVISED OF ANY INFORMATION THAT WE MAY RECEIVE ON THE INCIDENT. EILTS
UNQUOTE VANCE

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